



In-Class Physical Activity Breaks

Ideas for the Classroom

Physical Activity Breaks: These three- to five-minute physical activity ideas can be incorporated into any classroom. Here are some examples of how to get students moving. Feel free to get creative and come up with your own!

1. Chair Aerobics: Have students pull their chairs out from their desk. They should sit up straight, keeping their ankles together to do leg lifts by extending their legs to a 180-degree angle for 20 repetitions. Then have students stand behind the chair and while holding the back for balance, extend their right leg out to the side to a 45-degree angle for 20 repetitions. Then repeat with the left leg.

2. Task Master: Have students stand up and push in their chairs. Explain that you are going to give them a series of tasks and the goal is to complete them as quickly as possible. Direct students that once they have completed the task, they should stop where they are and raise their hand. For the first task have students touch 10 chairs not in a row. For the next task have students touch elbows with 8 classmates. For the last task, touch toes with 6 classmates wearing 6 different colored shirts.

3. Boogie Days: Have students spread out across the room and play one school-appropriate song and let kids bust-a-move. Have them follow your moves and make sure movements are appropriate. Try doing some vintage moves like the Twist, mash potatoes or just jumping around.

4. No Stress Test: Make it a classroom tradition to have a 5-minute walking break before a test to help everyone unwind and relax.

5. Take a Tour: Lead students on an imaginary tour of a different country or state in a charades-like game. For example, take a tour of Texas: march to the Alamo, climb an oak tree, climb Guadalupe Peak, swim in the Gulf of Mexico. Create other simulations that point out various landmarks within any state.

6. Play Cards: Using a standard card deck, assign an activity to each of the four suits (ex: jumping in place, running in place, sit-ups, squats). Pass out a card to each student and they have to do the activity for that suit for 20 seconds. Have students pass their cards to their neighbor and repeat for 5 passes. Add a twist: have students perform the activity the number of times designated on the card.

7. Mix it Up: Create a dance sequence one move at a time by calling out a move. Add one move each time through the sequence. Moves could include: stomp left, high five, jump twice, spin in a circle, squat, etc.

8. Acting Out: Read a paragraph or page of a book, and every time an action verb comes up, the students have to act it out.

9. Look Ma, No Hands!: Have students put an object on the floor (pen, notebook, ID card) and call out different body part they have to try to pick it up with (ex: elbows, feet, knees, forearm, neck, etc).

10. Keep it Clean: Push some chairs to the side and draw an imaginary line down the middle of the room. Give students several soft objects to throw (wadded up paper from the recycle bin works well). Students begin throwing objects across the line—the object is to keep objects off of your side of the room. When you call “time” the cleanest side (the one with the fewest objects) wins. Do best 2 out of 3 for minute sessions.

11. Calm Down: Lead students in stretches to help loosen up tension. Have students each hold for 15-20 seconds each: reach for the sky, touch toes, arm circles, neck circles, knee to chest, etc.

12. Quiz Me: While reviewing for a test, ask the students a series of true-or-false questions. If the question is true students should jump in place for 15 seconds. If it is false they should touch their toes.

13. Shake It: Students remain seated and raise their hands in the air. Have them start by shaking their right hand 10 times, left hand 10 times, left foot 10 times and right foot 10 times. Repeat counting down the number of shakes from 9-1. Speed up or slow down the counting to keep it interesting.

14. Workout Videos: Although most workout videos can last from 20-40 minutes, they’re often broken down into different moves that only last 2-4 minutes. If you have a TV in your classroom, work through a video over the course of a week doing one move at a time. Libraries often have workout videos for students.

15. Write Your Name: Using your index finger as an imaginary pencil, write your name in huge cursive in the air. Now repeat using different body parts as your pencil — elbow, knee, toe, belly button, head. Don’t forget to make sure all your i’s are dotted and t’s are crossed!

16. Mime Yourself: Have students get into pairs and without talking mirror each other's actions. Specify who will be the leader to start, and tell students that without talking they should switch back and forth as to who has the lead.

17. Take the Long Way: Before your next class change, stop class 3 minutes early and take your students the long way to their next room.

18. Stand Up for Vocabulary: Create a poem or song using vocabulary words that all start with the same letter. Every time a word starting with that letter is said or sung have students stand up or sit down.

19. Rainstorm: Have a rainstorm in your classroom. Have students follow your lead; begin by having students very lightly rubbing their hands together, then lightly snap, slap their thighs, slap their thighs and stomp their feet (the rainstorm is at its peak!). Then stop stomping their feet, just slap their thighs, return to lightly snapping, rubbing their hands and stop. Do each action for 20 seconds.

20. Animal Instincts: Pick one student to call out an animal and have everyone mimic how that animal moves. Go around the room until every student has an opportunity to call out an animal and the class has mimicked that animal.

21. Train Like a Pro: Have students emulate various sports for 10-15 seconds each:

- kick a field goal
 - shoot a jump shot
 - run through tires
 - swing a bat
 - serve a tennis ball
 - downhill skiing
 - spike a volleyball
 - swing a golf club
 - throw a football
 - shoot an arrow
 - shoot a hockey puck
 - swim
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22. The Classroom Workout Circuit: Have students do the following in place for 1 minute each (feel free to mix up the order): jog in place, high knees, jumping jacks, hop on one foot, hop on the other foot, hop on both feet.

23. Take a Seat!: Have students stand up and pull their chairs away from their desks. They should stand in front of their chair (seat facing out). Have students quickly sit, then stand, sit then stand 8-10 times. Next, quickly repeat sitting halfway down and standing, repeating 8-10 times. Last, have students barely sit (just touching the chair) and stand quickly repeating 8-10 times.

24. Stations: Create 3 stations in different areas of the room designated by a sign depicting a different physical activity (boxing jabs, running in place, jumping on both feet, jumping jacks, sit-ups, etc). Divide students into 3 groups and assign them to a station. Have students perform the activity for one minute and then rotate to the next station. To mix it up, add new types of activities or more stations.

25. Do the Conga!: Have students line up, placing their hands on the shoulders of the student in front of them. Start some music and lead students around the classroom.

26. Walk and Talk: Break students into groups of 2 or 3, and assign a topic related to a current lesson plan that students need to discuss while taking a 5-minute walk. They should report their discussion back to the class.

27. Physical Activity Jeopardy: Tape 5-10 envelopes with one physical activity listed inside each envelope on the board in the front of the classroom. Write 10, 15, 20 and 25 on the outside of each envelope. Call on a student to pick one of the envelopes, and the class performs the physical activity inside it for the number of repetitions listed on the front of the envelope. Activities could include: boxing jabs, jumps, push-ups, triceps dips using their chair, arm circles, jumping jacks, elbow to opposite knee touches, etc.

28. Feel the Beat: Have every student get a partner and sit cross legged on the floor facing their partner 2-3 feet away. Place a hacky-sac or other object between them. Turn on some music and have students perform the following actions to the beat of the music:

- tap knees
- tap shoulders
- clap
- tap knees, shoulders, clap
- clap partners hands (both, right-right, left-left)

When the music stops, students try to be the first to grab the hacky-sac. Repeat for 5 times.

29. Stretch It Out: Have students stand with both arms extended out in front. Slowly, alternate using arms to push open an imaginary door. Clasp hands together and extend arms out, bending the elbows slightly, and stretch neck by lowering your head (as if trying to touch nose to chest).

30. Future Trainer: Have a student lead a 3-5 minute physical activity break doing any activities or games of the class's choosing —be creative and have everyone in the class get involved.



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